



CORRUPTION AS A TOOL FOR POLITICAL DOMINANCE IN ZIMBABWE

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Overview of Zimbabwe

President Robert Mugabe and ZANU-PF have ruled Zimbabwe since independence in 1980.

Although ZANU-PF started off positively with the provision of social services, inability to curb other socio-economic issues including but not limited to, hyper-inflation, low economic performance and high unemployment led to decline of the formal economy. Political decisions have further entrenched the economic decline in Zimbabwe.

Despite the obvious failure of the ruling party, the country has had only two significant opposition parties. Joseph Nkomo was swiftly oppressed two years after independence. His followers were killed in Matabeleland and his party absorbed into ZANU-PF.

In 2002, Morgan Tsvangirai emerged a popular alternative to the present leadership. However, corruption in the political spheres of Zimbabwe by ZANU-PF has continued to decrease and undermine the popularity of Tsvangirai.

Hypothesis and Proposal

This work:

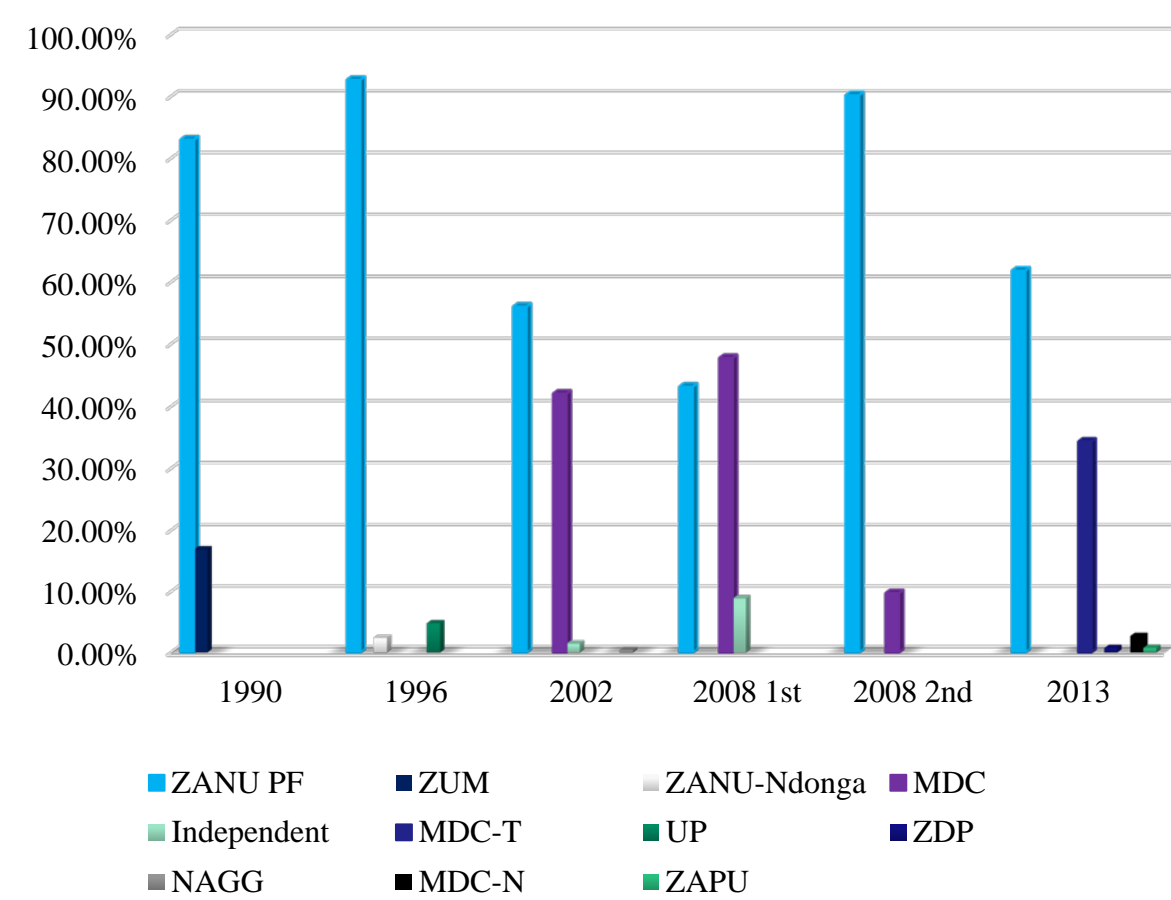
- Tests the hypothesis that, three factors of corruption including monopoly, discretion and lack of accountability in funding political parties, land policy and use of force have negatively impacted the electoral process of Zimbabwe.
- Also proposes that viability of Tsvangirai as a strong alternative to the present leadership lies in the use of the internet.

Electoral Trends in Zimbabwe

An analysis of election trends of presidential elections from 1990 to 2013 using data from the Voter Turnout Database of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance illustrates :

- President Mugabe and ZANU-PF have dominated the presidential elections up until 2008
- After 2008 run-off President Mugabe has continued maintain the lead
- Opposition parties have not recorded more than 17% since 1990 except MDC with 30% < under Morgan Tsvangirai (this excludes the 2008 run-off)

Figure 1. Showing voting trends in Zimbabwe since 1990



Corruption in the Electoral Process

Funding Political Parties

- ZANU-PF has been the only party to receive state subvention under the Political Parties Act of 1992 at average of \$4.2 million a year.
- ZANU-PF has prevented any auditing of party funding practices.
- Through M&S Syndicate, the party owns and has substantial shares in a wide array of companies who have contracts with the government.

Politicization of Land Policy

- Land has traditionally contributed about 15 to 20% to the GDP.
- In 2000, radical land seizure led to economical decline and sanctions from the international community.
- Operation Murambatsvina was used to suppress urban following of MDC and also impacted the informal economy of Zimbabwe.

Figure 2. Showing police monitoring Operation Murabatsvina. (Cheqmayt Wordpress.)



Figure 3. Showing child going through rubble in the wake of Operation Murambatsvina (Herzimbabwe.com)



Use of Force and Intimidation

- The use of state forces and intimidation to suppress opposition has been a dominant trait of the ruling government beginning with the genocide in Matabeleland and ousting of Nkomo.
- State forces and war veterans have brutally attacked and killed executives and members of opposition.
- State controlled media has blocked campaign advertisements of opposition while pushing agenda of ruling party.

Figure 4. showing fear of violence among various party supporters (Ndomo, 2015)

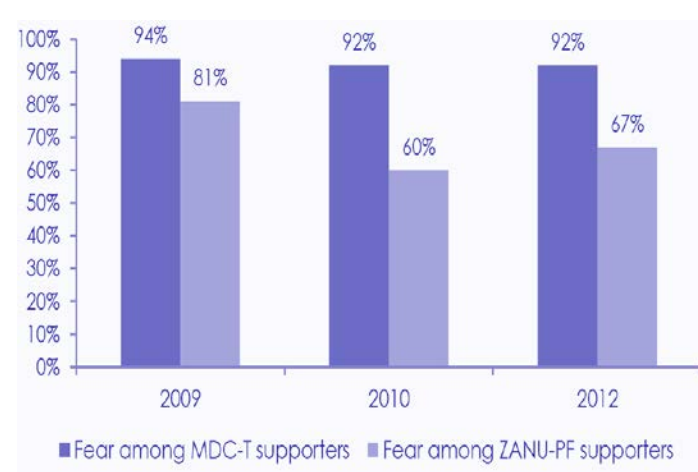


Figure 5. Showing Tsvangirai and supporters in 2007 after being arrested and beaten by police (Britannica.com)



- Rape has been documented to be used by ZANU PF to oppress MDC supporters with impunity.
 - With the election violence in 2008, one woman was told her actions would be going “against the government” when she tried to file a report.

Figure 6. Showing Party Affiliations of Rape Victims (Aids-Free World, 2009)

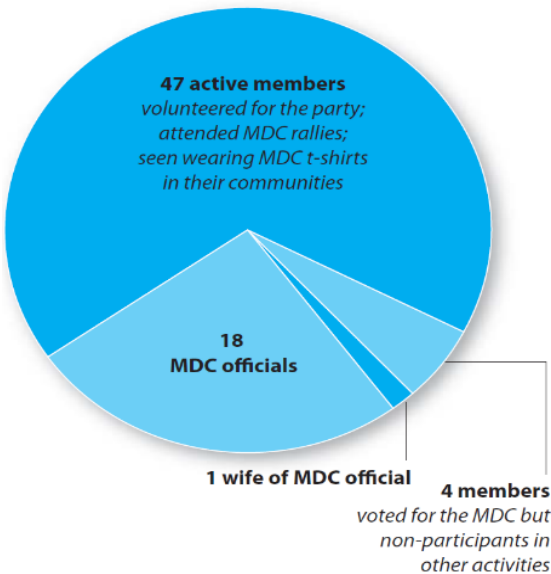
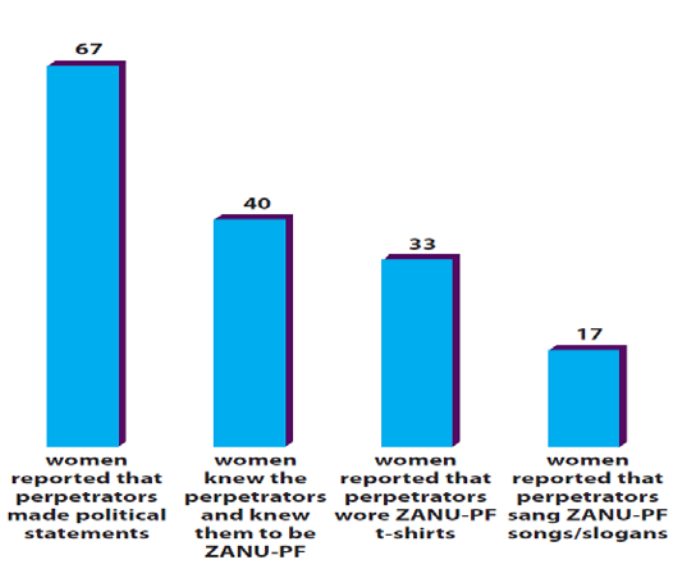


Figure 7. Shows How Women Identified Party Affiliation of Rapists (Aids-Free World, 2009)



Viability of Opposition

Besides already existent blocks to opposition, Morgan Tsvangirai’s popularity was further undermined when he agreed to the power sharing deal after his loss in the 2008 run-off.

Tsvangirai’s popularity dropped from 57% in 2009 to 32% in 2012.

However, during this deal Zimbabwe saw some positive economic growth which has been accredited to Tsvangirai’s efforts.

In light of the opposition’s decline, this work proposes that the rise of internet and mobile penetration rates in Zimbabwe would serve as an indispensable tool in terms of mobilizing citizens and their political interests.

Zimbabwe has an internet penetration rate of 47.5%. Total broadband subscriptions climbed 6.45 percentage points in 2013 from 2012.

The number of internet subscriptions also rose from estimated 4.4 million to 5.2 million at the same time.

The internet could be used to get under the radar of the security services under Mugabe in terms of strategically mobilization.

The sharpness of MDC-T to tap into this resource with attention to factors like anonymity and the security of its members would guard against intimidation by the ruling party which is critical to its potential.

Conclusion

Reflecting on the voting trends, the levels of monopoly, discretion and lack of accountability of President Mugabe and ZANU-PF in terms of :

- funding the party
- incentivizing party members while oppressing supporters of the opposition through the politicization of the land policy
- as well as the brutal use of force including rape

has maintained its dominance in the political sphere of Zimbabwe to the detriment of the country. Tapping into the rise of the internet as to mobilizing citizens would be a potent tool towards ending the dominance of ZANU-PF and President Mugabe.

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